

# Safety and health alert

## 10/95 Spiral staircases - business services

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### Incident

A receptionist/secretary descending a steep internal spiral staircase missed her footing on the second step from the top and fell forward over the balustrade.

She fell onto the concrete floor of the storey below, fracturing her skull and wrist.

### Factors

1. The balustrade was too low, particularly given the likely direction of any fall.
2. The *goings* were too narrow.
3. The *treads* of the staircase did not have a non-slip finish or a suitable non-skid strip near the edge of the *nosings*.

The staircase had not been approved by the local building authority. The dimensions of the balustrade, risers and goings of the staircase did not meet the requirements of:

- the *Uniform Building by-Laws 1974* (UBB), applicable when the staircase was built.
- the *Building Code of Australia 1990 Amendment No 7* (BCA), applicable to a staircase being built now.

Stairs should have a non-slip finish and non-skid strip.

### Recommendations

1. Building plans should be referred to the local building authority.
2. Staircases "must be suitable to provide safe passage in relation to the nature, volume and frequency of likely usage" (BCA, Clause D2.13).
3. Staircases should comply with the BCA, or the licence approval conditions.
4. Spiral staircases should be restricted to low usage areas.

### Further Information

Further information can be obtained from the WorkSafe internet site [www.worksafe.wa.gov.au](http://www.worksafe.wa.gov.au), or by contacting customer service on 1300 307 877 or email: [safety@docep.wa.gov.au](mailto:safety@docep.wa.gov.au).

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